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**Inventory for
Manuscript Collection
MS-438**

Captain Rufus F. Wells Family Papers
Inclusive dates: 1837-1931
Bulk dates: 1870-1904

by
Tracy Lamaestra
October 2012

Shelf feet: .5 linear feet
Number of boxes: 2
Accession no. 2009.57.111

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Abstract

Rufus F. Wells, *Captain*

Family papers, 1837-1931 (Bulk dates: 1870-1904)

2 Manuscript size boxes (.5 Shelf feet)

Ship captains and ship carpenter from Brooklin, Maine.

Account, seaman's time and log books of Captain Rufus F. Wells family. This includes seven account books, one seaman's time book, three log books and one personal account book. Vessel records of the *Altavela* (Schooner), *L. B. Cowperthwaite* (Schooner), *Princeton* (Brig), *Lettie Wells* (Schooner), *Fair Wind* (Schooner), *Forest City* (Schooner), *L. B. Sargent* (Schooner), *Dexter Clark* (Schooner), *Eagle* (Schooner) and *Samos* (Schooner) among others. The collection is arranged as follows: Series I. Vessel records, Series II. Personal papers.

Gift from Charles E. Burden, 2009.

MS-438. Accession No. 2009.57.111.

Finding aid available in repository; folder and item level control.

Added entries—persons:

Freethy, Elwell W., *Captain*

Wells, Humphrey

Wells, Julius Calvin, *Captain*

Wells, Rufus F. *Captain*

Wells, Warren, *Captain*

Wells, William Roswell, *Captain*

Added entries—places:

Brooklin, ME

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels):

Altavela (Brig)

Dexter Clark (Schooner)

Fair Wind (Schooner)

Forest City (Schooner)

L. B. Cowperthwaite (Schooner)

L. B. Sargent (Schooner)

Lettie Wells (Schooner)

Princeton (Brig)

Samos (Schooner)

Added entries—key terms:

Accounts [not LC]

Account book [not LC]

Log-books

Merchant seamen

Seamanship

Ship captains

Ship carpenters

Voyage and travels

Acquisition

The Captain Rufus F. Wells family papers were donated to the Maine Maritime Museum by Charles E. Burden on December 18, 2009, accession no. 2009.57.111.

Provenance

The collection came to the Maine Maritime Museum along with other assorted material (books, booklets, photographs, manuscripts, ephemera and blueprints) as a gift from Charles E. Burden. The donor purchased these items from dealers through the mail and at antique shows, flea markets, auctions and shops.

Physical Condition

This collection is nineteenth and early twentieth-century account, seaman's timebook, log and personal account books. Most books are quarter or half-bound in leather with marble paper covered front and back boards. A smaller account book cover is made entirely of leather. There are two small notebooks. All show wear and slight deterioration. Pages are soiled, stained or discolored. Take note of:

- Account book (1871-1883) - Pages are missing.
- Seaman's time book (1876-1884) - Page is missing. Ink faded.
- Log book (1870-1879) - Pages are missing. Pages are partially torn free from stitching. Penciled writing is faded.
- Log book (1880-1883) - Page broken free from stitching. Ink and penciled writing faded.
- Log book (1883-1903) - Bottom of some pages broken free from stitching.
- Account book (1837-1872) - Corner missing to cover. Signature loose. Missing pages. A small receipt is adhered to this account book.

All the loose papers with creases and/or folds were flattened with a tacking iron at low to medium heat.

Biographical Notes

Captain Rufus F. Wells (b. 1845-d. 1932)

Captain Rufus F. Wells was born on July 21, 1845 in Brooklin, Maine to Humphrey Wells (b. 1801-d. 1862) and Hannah Allen (b. 1804). Captain Wells married Grace Darling Mayo (b. 1862-d. 1926) on February 22, 1883 at Brooklin.^{1, 2} They had daughter Irene Ruth (b. 1898-d. 1979) and resided in Brooklin.²

Captain Wells was a seaman out of Brooklin in 1870.² By 1880, he was a mate for his brother Captain Julius Calvin Wells aboard the *Altavela* (Schooner) a coasting trade vessel. Captain R. F. Wells took charge of the *Altavela* (Schooner) as master on August 13, 1880. He commandeered this vessel from 1880-1884.³ Captain Wells was shipmaster of the *L. B.*

Cowperthwaite (Schooner) as well.⁴ He kept detailed account books for vessels and log books for voyages. Captain Wells also maintained seamen time and wage records. Cargoes contained lumber, sugar and coal.

He was listed as a farmer in the 1910 and 1920 U. S. Federal Census in Brooklin.² Captain Rufus F. Wells died on December 6, 1932 at Brooklin.¹ His wife died in 1926 at age 64 in Brooklin.²

Humphrey Wells (b. 1801-d. 1862)

Humphrey Wells was born January 27, 1801 in Sedgwick, Maine to William Carrel (b. 1759-d. 1839) and Mary Herrick (b. 1768-d. 1844). He married Hannah Allen (b. 1804) on August 20, 1829. They had children Julius Calvin (b. 1829-d. ?), Huldah H. (b. 1832), Araminta D. (b. 1835), Rufus F. (b. 1845-d. 1932), Reyes S. (abt. 1848) and Rosa D. (b. 1848). The family resided in Sedgwick and then Brooklin, Maine.² He was the father to Captain Rufus F. Wells.

Humphrey was a ship carpenter.² He worked on vessels such as the *E. L. Thompson* (Schooner), *Tarquin* (Schooner), *Abby Watson* (Brig), *Marcellus* (Schooner), *James* (Schooner), *Mechanic* (Schooner), *Grecian* (Schooner), *Live Oak* (Schooner), *Centurion* (Schooner), *Watson* (Brig), *H. W. Wellington* (Brig), *Susan* (Schooner), *Alpine* (Schooner), *A. Lawrence* (Schooner) and *Florence* (Schooner). Humphrey was employed by Brooklin as a surveyor and town clerk. Moreover, he was assigned as overseer of the poor on March 13, 1858 and March 10, 1859.⁵ He died on August 11, 1862 in Brooklin.²

Captain Julius Calvin Wells (b. 1829-d. ?)

Captain Julius Calvin Wells was born on November 28, 1829 in Sedgwick, Maine to Humphrey Wells (b. 1801-d. 1862) and Hannah Allen (b. 1804).² He married Rachel A. Herrick (b. 1837-d. 1918) on December 6, 1857 in Brooklin.¹ They had children Clarence, Harris, Millie, Lulu and Crosby (b. 1868) and resided in Brooklin.² He was the brother to Captain Rufus F. Wells.

Captain Julius Calvin Wells was a mariner in 1850.² He was drafted into the Civil War in 1863 at 33 years old. Captain J. C. Wells returned to seafaring as a master mariner after the Civil War.² He was a shipmaster and owner of the *Princeton* (Brig), which hailed from the port of Brooklin. Captain J. C. Calvin was also master of the *Lettie Wells* (Schooner) in 1871-1873, 1877.⁶ He commandeered the *Altavela* (Schooner) with his brother as mate in 1880.³ Captain Wells mastered the schooner *Altavela* from 1880-1885.⁶ Moreover, he purchased 1/16 of the schooner *Alpine* for \$125.00 on May 19, 1857. He earned \$19.49 on October 1, 1857 for the *Alpine* (Schooner). In 1860, he paid \$100.00 for co-ownership of the *A. Lawrence* (Schooner). He died sometime between 1885 and 1900. Last entry for him as master of the schooner *Altavela* was in 1885.⁶ His wife was listed as widowed in the 1900 United States Census. Rachel, wife, died on September 22, 1918.²

Captain Warren Wells (b. 1821-d. 1904)

Captain Warren Wells was born on May 27, 1821 in Sedgwick, Maine to Deacon John Wells (b. 1791-d. 1848) and Ruth Herrick (b. 1794-d. 1858). He married Mary Ann Herrick (b. 1832-d. 1921). They had Edgar W. (b. 1852) and resided in Brooklin.²

His father Deacon John Wells was the brother to Humphrey Wells. Warren was the nephew to Humphrey Wells and the cousin to Captain Rufus F. Wells. He was a sailor at 29 years

old and later a sea captain. He commandeered the *Laura S. Watson* (Schooner) in 1865. He was retired as a farmer in 1880.² Captain Warren Wells died on June 16, 1904.²

Captain William Roswell Wells (b. 1827-d. ?)

Captain William Roswell Wells was born on August 13, 1827 in Sedgwick, Maine to Deacon John Wells (b. 1791-d. 1848) and Ruth Herrick (b. 1794-d. 1858). He married Lettie Hooper (b. 1840-d. 1892) on September 12, 1861. They had children Roswell (b. 1854), Elizabeth “Lizzie” M. (b. 1864-d. 1915) and John L. (b. 1867) and resided in Brooklin.²

His father Deacon John Wells was the brother to Humphrey Wells. William was the nephew to Humphrey Wells and the cousin to Captain Rufus F. Wells. He was a sailor and then later a ship captain. In 1852, he became part owner of the brig *J. Means* with Daniel Means and then shipmaster from 1859-1869.^{6, 7} He commandeered and also owned the *Lettie Wells* (Schooner).⁶ Capt. W. R. Wells was drafted into the Civil War in 1863 and died sometime after 1870.²

References cited:

1. <https://familysearch.org>.
2. ancestry.com and <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com>
3. MS-423. Box 2. Folder 2. Seaman’s Time Book, 1876-1884.
4. MS-423. Box 1, Folder 3. Account book, 1880-1890.
5. MS-423. Box 1. Folder 1. Account book, 1855-1862.
6. <http://library.mysticseaport.org>
7. Wasson, George S. *Sailing Days on the Penobscot: The River and Bay As They Were in the Old Days*. Salem, Massachusetts: Marine Research Society, 1932.

Scope and Content Notes

This is a collection of account and log books of the Captain Rufus F. Wells family. They were ship captains and a ship carpenter from Brooklin, Maine. Records include account books, a seaman’s time book, log books and a personal account book. Account and log books have a number of vessel entries per book. These vessels are the *Altavela* (Schooner), *L. B. Cowperthwaite* (Schooner), *Princeton* (Brig), *Lettie Wells* (Schooner), *Fair Wind* (Schooner), *Forest City* (Schooner), *L. B. Sargent* (Schooner), *Dexter Clark* (Schooner), *Eagle* (Schooner) and *Samos* (Schooner) among others.

In account book, 1855-1862, H. Wells labored and surveyed vessels. This is the father (Humphrey Wells) of Captain Rufus F. Wells. Captains Julius Calvin Wells, Warren Wells and William R. Wells are listed in this same account book. This is both a vessel and personal account book pertaining to the Wells family.

It is unclear whether Warren Wells or William R. Wells mastered the *Lettie Wells* (Schooner) and *Princeton* (Brig) as Mystic Seaport on-line records indicate “Wells” or “W. Wells” as captains, except for the year 1870 a “Wm. Wells” is listed as master for the *Lettie Wells* (Schooner).

Account book, 1921-1931, has a list of thirteen suicide victims. Admiral Blake is listed as the fourth victim in addition to George Ingalls the thirteenth victim who was “shot in wood lot” on December 24, 1921. There are “Names of Men 75 years old and over” on October 29, 1925.

Birth and some death dates are recorded for these men and women. In this list is Rufus F. Wells born July 21, 1845.

The log book, 1880-1883, indicates that on September 19, 1881 President Garfield died at eleven o'clock. Captain Wells in the log book, 1883-1903, writes when on the *Samos* (Schooner) about problems with his cooks. On April 22, 1902 the cook Benjamin C. Perry refused to help and was a "very poor cook." Also, Captain Wells noted on November 18, 1902 that the cook came aboard half drunk. The cook was still drunk at 10 am the next morning.

The collection captures physical ailments when at sea. In the log book, 1883-1903, Captain Rufus F. Wells writes on April 14, 1903 that the mate had a painful eye. He went to the eye and ear infirmary in the night and was told his eye needed removed (p. 88).

The personal account book, 1837-1872, of Captain Rufus F. Wells records labor costs for building a barn and an account entry for an old Town House in 1868. Even though Rufus F. Wells name is written inside the cover, the earlier entries in this personal account book are not of Captain Rufus F. Wells as he was born in 1845. These early entries may have been written by his father Humphrey Wells.

Processing Notes

The collection of eight account books, one seaman's time book and three log books were arranged into series and subseries. Account books, seaman's time book and log books pertaining to vessels were placed in **Series I. Vessel records**. Series I. was categorized further into subseries: *Subseries IA. Account books*, *Series IB. Seaman's time book* and *Series IC. Log books*. Account and log books were arranged chronologically within their respective subseries. **Series II. Personal papers** is a personal account book of Rufus F. Wells. Loose papers found inside account and log books were placed in folders with the proper account or log book.

Descriptive notes of the collection made possibly by donor were placed with supporting documents. These notes were sleeved and marked which account book or log book they came from.

Description of Series

Series I. Vessel records (n.d., 1855-1931)

Subseries IA. Account books Account book, 1855-1862, pertains to Humphrey Wells, Julius Calvin Wells, Warren Wells and William R. Wells. The account book is both vessel and personal related. Vessels entries include the *E. L. Thompson* (Schooner), *Tarquin* (Schooner), *Abby Watson* (Brig), *Marcellus* (Schooner), *James* (Schooner), *Mechanic* (Schooner), *Grecian* (Schooner), *Live Oak* (Schooner), *Centurion* (Schooner), *Watson* (Brig), *H. W. Wellington* (Brig), *Susan* (Schooner), *Florence* (Schooner), *Alpine* (Schooner) and *A. Lawrence* (Schooner). Loose paper inside the account book is a general shipping correspondence of an unknown maker and unknown recipient.

Account book, 1871-1883, for the *Lettie Wells* (Schooner), *Princeton* (Brig) and *Altavela* (Schooner). Loose paper found inside account book is a note listing people that came to call on [Sedgwick Brown] in Brooklin, 1855.

Account book, 1880-1890, of Captain Rufus F. Wells for the *L. B. Cowperthwaite* (Schooner). Includes crew wages and accounts of stores.

Account book, 1888-1902, of Captain Rufus F. Wells for the *L. B. Cowperthwaite* (Schooner).

Account book, 1888-1904, of Captain Rufus F. Wells recording seamen wages. Loose papers found inside account book include a note marked "R. F. Wells," Pratt's Coast Pilot card and Independent Herring Co. blank card.

Account book, 1890-1904, for the *L. B. Cowperthwaite* (Schooner) and *Samos* (Schooner). Loose papers found inside account book are a note with math calculations and two other papers of miscellaneous tallies.

Account book, 1921-1931, for the *Samos* (Schooner). Includes short log entries. There are some personal notations as well. This includes a list of thirteen suicide victims. Loose paper found inside account book is an empty envelope to R. F. Wells from The City National Bank of Belfast.

Subseries IB. Seaman time book: Seaman's Time Book, 1876-1884 for the *Altavela* (Brig) with Captain E. W. Freeley, Captain Julius Calvin Wells and Captain Rufus F. Wells as masters.

Subseries IC. Log books: Log book, 1870-1879, includes the *Fairwind* (Schooner) and *Forest City* (Schooner) voyages. Captain Johnson was shipmaster of the schooner *Forest City*. It is unclear which vessel the first part of the log book refers to as no specific vessel is listed. The schooner *Carrie M. Richardson* is briefly noted. The log book includes accounts for the *Forest City* (Schooner), *L. B. Sargent* (Schooner), *Dexter Clark* (Schooner) and *Eagle* (Schooner).

Log book, 1880-1883, for the *Altavela* (Brig) with Captain Rufus F. Wells as master.

Log book, 1883-1903, *Altavela* (Brig) and *Samos* (Schooner) with Captain Rufus F. Wells as master. Loose paper found inside log book is a Washington Life Insurance Co. of New York calendar for February 1903. The back side has some math calculations.

Series II. Personal papers (n.d., 1837-1972): Personal account book, 1837-1872, of Rufus F. Wells. Earlier entries are possibly by father Humphrey Wells. Loose paper found inside account book marked "Acc't Bks. 4."

**MS-438 Captain Rufus F. Wells Family Papers
Finding Aid**

Box# Folder #

Series I. Vessel records

Subseries IA. Account books

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | Account book, 1855-1862 (Various vessels) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes loose paper found inside account book, n.d. |
| | 2 | Account book, 1871-1883 (Various vessels) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes loose paper found inside account book, 1885 |
| | 3 | Account book, 1880-1890 <i>L. B. Cowperthwaite</i> (Schooner) |
| | 4 | Account book, 1888-1902 <i>L. B. Cowperthwaite</i> (Schooner) |
| | 5 | Account book, 1888-1904 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes loose paper found inside account book, n.d. |
| | 6 | Account book, 1890-1904, schooners <i>L. B. Cowperthwaite</i> and <i>Samos</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes loose papers found inside account book, n.d., 1903 |
| 2 | 1 | Account book, 1921-31 (<i>Includes the schooner Samos</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes loose paper found inside account book, 1922 |

Subseries IB. Seaman time books

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 | Seaman's Time Book, 1876-1884, <i>Altavela</i> (Brig) |
|---|--|

Subseries IC. Log books

- | | |
|---|--|
| 3 | Log book, 1870-1879 (Various vessels) |
| 4 | Log book, 1880-1883, <i>Altavela</i> (Brig) |
| 5 | Log book, 1883-1903, <i>Altavela</i> (Brig) and <i>Samos</i> (Schooner) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes loose papers found inside log book, 1903 |

Series II. Personal papers

- | | |
|---|---|
| 6 | Account book, 1837-1872 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes loose paper found inside account book, n.d. |
|---|---|